

Winter 1957-8

# outposts

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JOHN SEYMOUR

JOHN E. CASPALL

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## DANNIE ABSE

### *The Abandoned*

*Where is my God? what hidden place  
Conceals thee still?  
What covert dare eclipse thy face?  
Is it thy will?*

GEORGE HERBERT.

*. . . thy absence doth excel  
All distance known*

GEORGE HERBERT.

### I

**G**OD, when You came to our house  
we let You in. Hunted,  
we gave You succour,  
bandaged Your hands,  
bathed Your feet.

Wanting water we gave You wine.  
Wanting bread we gave You meat.

Sometimes, God, You should recall  
we are Your hiding place.  
Take away these hands  
and You would fall.

Outside, the pursuers pass.  
We only have to call.  
They would open You  
with broken glass.

Who else then could we betray  
if not You, the nearest?  
God, how You watch us  
and shrink away.

## II

Never have we known You so transparent.  
You stand against the curtain and wear  
its exact design. And if a window opens  
(like a sign) then is it You  
or the colours which are blown apart?  
As in a station, sitting in a carriage,  
we wonder which of the waiting trains depart.

You startle from room to room, apologising.

God, You can't help Your presence  
any more than the glassy air that lies  
between tree and skies. No need to pass  
through wave-lengths human ears can't sense.

We never hear the front door close when You are leaving.  
Sometimes we question if You are there at all.  
No need to be so self-effacing ;  
quiet as language of the roses  
or moss upon a wall.

We have to hold our breath to hear You breathing.

## III

Dear God in the end You had to go.  
Dismissing You, Your absence made us sane.  
We keep the bread and wine for show.

Only what we do not know we know.  
When Your great lights failed, fused at the main,  
dear God in the end You had to go.

The winds of war and derelictions blow,  
howling across the radioactive plain.  
We keep the bread and wine for show.

Like a stream instinctively we flow  
down from the direction of Your pain.  
Dear God in the end You had to go.

And still our dark declensions sorrow  
that grape is but grape and grain is grain.  
We keep the bread and wine for show.

At night we look up and see You glow,  
already Your wounds begin to wane.  
Dear God in the end You had to go,  
we keep the bread and wine for show.

#### IV

Tonight, God, all colours are black,  
our small voices out of hearing.  
In Your great dark You lose the track.  
Detachment is what You lack,  
so faithless must stumble back.

Do not weep. Though we were out  
when You returned, do not blaspheme  
cursing Man. (Then must we be devout?)  
Long ago You began to doubt  
if You really heard us shout.

It was Your own voice, God, that cried.  
Angry now, You thrust back the bolt  
against the human noise outside.  
Oh open the damned door wide.  
Maybe someone dear has died.

Why, God, do You hesitate  
as the loudening, urgent cry  
gains momentum from help to hate?  
Senile, You arrive too late.  
Nobody at the gate.

Your humiliation quite complete.  
Lamp after lamp, door after door,  
empty the curved unlovely street.  
We fled not wanting Your defeat.  
Far, the sound of running feet.

Until gladly You hear again  
an idiot desperate in a house,  
the strict economy of pain,  
a voice human and profane  
calling You by name.

### LOUIS NEWMAN

#### *Equilibrium*

LOOKING down one hundred flights in air  
I feel safer, being closer  
than I'll ever be to heaven.  
The little ants below dodging  
red and green reaching exits  
and entrances, calculating minutes.

In another hour the checking  
will balance out the day.  
Plus or minus will not alter  
colour, slab, or lighting thunder,  
silenced in the tunnels  
of the darkest street.

*U.S.A.*

## GAEL TURNBULL

### *A Crowd Watching a Burning House at Night*

LIKE insects trembling on the window pane,  
They skirt the brightness (and their need the same :  
To court the aristocracy of flame—  
The ruthlessness they secretly admire—  
The fear they do not know that they desire)  
Unwittingly to honour this disdainful fire  
That has disturbed their customary night,  
Who gain but shadows and must shield their sight  
And are revealed by the destroying light.

## JOHN HEATH-STUBBS

### *To Edmund Blunden on his 60th Birthday*

THYRSIS, or Corydon, or old Damoetas—  
I must address you  
By some such green, Virgilian-vowelled name—  
You, the last and truly-tempered voice  
Of all our lovely, dead, and pastoral England :  
The radio brings that voice to me tonight,  
Reading your poem, the vocables  
With Kentish loam adhering to them still.  
You on the Chinese shore, and I  
In Alexandrian garboils? No—  
For fourteen years are abrogated now ;  
The evening sun is gilding Abingdon,  
And Kirk White's verse, and Bloomfield's, and Clare's  
Our topic as we sit here at the bar,  
And brown-haired boys are playing in the street.

*Egypt.*

## J. R. BROWNFIELD

*Okay, so he did*

“OKAY, so he did himself in,  
as sure as if he'd cocked the gun himself.  
Just stood there and watched, while the sound  
dug into him and his seeing  
went full of holes. And now  
you sit there and say ‘suicide’  
as if you were saying something !

“Don’t you see, he was in a hurry  
to get somewhere you can only get to  
by standing still. And it takes  
a damn sight of looking to find that course.  
No ships go that way, boy,  
and he knew it. He’d tried the ships,  
but they never took him past himself,  
and that wasn’t far enough.

“Didn’t you ever catch him looking ?  
Like on a dark night when  
everything was quiet as oil  
on a windless sea, or sometimes  
at the rail when the stars  
were so silent bright you could all  
but hear them bursting while he looked ?  
No, there wasn’t any sea wide enough

To get him there, so he took the only course  
that leads nowhere and put all his money  
on it. He just stood still, and, don’t you see,  
he got himself a one-way ticket  
in the last direction. That one  
got himself shanghaied into standing still.

"And you can bet your last  
100 proof breath against the sky,  
when he was standing there watching that gun  
and seeing past it into . . .  
Hell, I don't know what he was seeing!  
But he wasn't worrying himself  
about some pup with a drink in his hand  
saying 'suicide' as if he'd said something."

*U.S.A.*

### MICHAEL BULLOCK

*Autumn Evening, Mevagissey*

LEANING at evening over the harbour wall,  
I watch the wild water surging against the stones.  
From the dark depths fishes' eyes coldly glimmer  
and seaweed writhes in anguished arabesques.

Beneath my fingers the stone surface trembles,  
the salt wind whispers and mutters at my ear.  
The tree-clad hillside behind my back  
casts its bronze leaves upon the tossing air.

The fishing boats shake and shudder, bob and duck,  
twist at their ropes and snatch at the passing waves.  
The shipyard is silent, only the quayside pub  
spits out a jet of pale-ale yellow light

that mirrors a moon half drowned by the spindrift clouds  
and floating rudderless in a turbulent ocean of sky.  
The moon goes out, blown like a guttering candle,  
and darkness grips the harbour in both its hands.

## EDWIN BROCK

### *A Plea for Cities*

IF I could wish you other than you are  
Or have you waiting, as you appear to be  
Half-here, half-other, half-near, half-far,  
I'd open the rivers and allow the sea  
To celebrate this phantasy

And on the headlands which would still remain,  
The cathedral tops and corners of the banks,  
I'd let the lions come leaping to regain  
Their pre-cage kingdom, while gods gave thanks  
For wisdom in their ranks.

If I could wish you as you wish to be  
When I have seen the lamp-post's amber eye  
Go reaching out into eternity,  
As I reach out at every gutter cry,  
I'd wish my worst, I'd try

For every witch-worn formula I know  
To round your edges and rip out your veins,  
To have your furnaces lay silent under snow,  
To have the stenches that abide your drains  
Leap out and laugh you belly-pains;

And yet, you know, I could not wish you harm,  
At least no more than I have wished myself  
In words which do not comfort, but will warm  
The limb the surgeon pricked to health  
By suffering and by stealth

So will you let me wish you? Already I have seen  
The rivers stretching up to overflow  
Have heard the roots creak silently between  
The fashioned stones, and watched the slow  
Secrets where no winds blow

So that all my wishing at last may be  
No more than anticipation. And yet  
We might at first retain duplicity  
And move the world between us to forget  
The suffering that her suns beget.

### TERENCE CAVE

*Mallarmé*

FEARING the whiteness, bord of wing and quill  
At the ocean wind's clearest apex, fell  
The poet searching down: the narrow well  
Of words received him, thrust him spiral, till  
He found the focus of infinity.  
Here was his task. He loaded feathers deep  
With touchless worlds of longing, while the steep  
Wall strained up stepless. But the purity  
Of a single note summoned him. Herose,  
Found breath, sang perfect on the winter tide.  
And when they found the body of a swan  
Caught in the agony of freezing, close  
To the false hand of space his wings denied,  
They stopped to question where his soul had gone.

## ROY McFADDEN

### *Family Album: 2*

(*for Stephen*)

FOR you it was a going to, a shout :  
For me, a coming back, almost a sigh.  
And yet, what was it then, for me, when eye  
Swept up with hand in greeting, but firm doubt  
And resolute retreat from all advances :  
I never ran to clutch the sea and sky,  
And sad drums dragged down all my wildest dances.

Small pioneer, thrusting the awkward sand  
From heel and toe, not overawed at all  
By drastic distance or the cold gulls' call  
Between the sea and the shore : to understand  
Is always involved with death ; it's best to move  
Gull-like along the sea's rim, and never fall  
Among the tide-lines drawing a grief of love.

*Northern Ireland.*

## ROYE McCOYE

### *Fear*

STAKING, bemused, at summer's fabulous  
Extravaganza roaring like a flood,  
I feel the scytheman nibble at my name  
And chew the green gall of my bitter cud.

Aglast, I poke the precious garbage in  
The gaudy middens of my heart and head,  
And tell my terror to a selfmade ghost  
Who keeps a cunning silence like the dead.

Under the blazing sun I sit—foxing  
A calm I do not feel—in my wheelchair  
(O listen to the merrymaking birds!)  
And watch my telltale fingers shake with fear.

But now there is a question I must ask :  
Is it my fear or cowardice I mask ?

## HYACINTHE HILL

### *There is no Door*

THERE is a door, one only and the key  
Is in my hand and I will leave this land  
Where ferris wheels and artificial snow  
Carry me high and low, burn me with glass,  
Treadwheel my feet with fear to feel and know  
More than the fatning-thinning mirror cares  
To show ; where dragons flick their tissue tongues,  
Tremble children in their paper fires,  
Promise good girls a beautiful (empty) box,  
Obedient boys a rubber knife that bends  
And ‘nows’ are always dangled up in ends.

I would be naked with him who stands outside,  
The door between, and calls me for his bride,  
Willing to clear a path in honest earth,  
Plant clover where the butterflies may hover,  
Which used to haunt my head ; when shadows are dead  
And he has kissed the red buds on my breast  
To fullest bloom and he has made a nest  
Within the burning bush where I will warm  
His seed, then we will sing, “There is no door  
And nothing stands outside.” And what is there to hide?  
Where love abides, there is no door.

*U.S.A.*

## PARIS LEARY

*Counter-Revolution*

(November 1956)

L IKE a young girl shaking out her hair,  
the chestnut tree shakes out the yellow light  
which glitters in its leaves as from within.

A radio in Merton, from a window  
brings news of war, the annual aggressor,  
the season's outlaw, fighting in the streets,  
house-to-house reprisals, deaths in bed,  
and the list of all the unheroic dead.

But all that is deceptive. Now it is  
the Armageddon in the mind that counts,  
the final dying of the liberal dream,  
after which nothing is the same.

Our Spanish youth, with unrequited lust,  
turns old in spirit's counter-revolution  
where Christ and the angels under mortar-fire  
hunt us remorsefully from door to door.

Below this soft parquet of chestnut leaves  
blood crusts at every casual step, and yellow  
November withers in the painful sun.

Something of the heart's forlorn tradition  
excites commitment, anger, or belief,  
something rooted there but lying fallow  
stirs, as the season dies, and makes the will,  
shabby and unpractised, ripe for the kill.

Flak-tattered, still the angel horde  
manoeuvres in the alleys of the mind ;  
winter warps the tunnels of escape  
which gave gentility its neutral hope.

Forgiveness blocks the way at every border,  
and compassion roams the walls we crouch behind.  
Outside, where nothing counts, the chestnut tree  
rustles in the light's alacrity

but fails to simplify or to distract—  
the world has shrunk beyond or underneath  
the matted earth ; the radio, the tree,  
are objects of bewildered memory  
from which we now retreat in recollection.  
The mind's crack regiment puts Christ to death,  
and that would liberate us, that would serve—  
but he only dies in order to forgive,  
  
and mercy is our master. We are lost.  
The radio assures us of a treaty,  
but that is aspiration playing foul—  
detachment was the treaty in the soul,  
which now lies broken by the angel host  
who smash assumptions when they take to flight,  
but in the ruins of an anxious youth  
build Salem with the rubble of the truth.

## DOUGLAS GIBSON

### *Mist over the Estuary*

WHERE yesterday I saw a sunlit sea  
    Busy with ships, and seagulls lifting wide  
And dazzling wings along the estuary  
Above the white waves of a temperate tide,  
This Autumn morning brings a sudden change  
Where smoky swirling mists deceive the eye,  
And all is a desertion, faithless, strange:  
The pearly grey of water and of sky  
Has no division, so it seems that where  
The syrens mourn with melancholy wail,  
The ghosts of ships are poised upon the air  
And spectral seagulls through the water sail.

## LESLIE NORRIS

### *At the Grave of Dylan Thomas*

IF I were young I could  
    Make eager grief of this grave  
And let the warm sorrow come  
    And cover me like a wave,  
The cathartic tears ease out  
    That sooth the constricted heart.

It would be over and done—  
    A romantic memory made  
Out of this drift of rain  
    And the passive part I played.  
But spontaneous youth is gone ;  
    The moved heart is a stone.

Time makes a flint of the heart  
    That grief cannot spark into flame,  
A stubborn, intractable weight  
    Moved but to inadequate blame.  
Here, between hill and sea,  
    Resignation rules finally.

So I'll not denounce this death  
    Nor embitter the ordinary air  
With blown words that my breath  
    Is now too small to wear.  
Sufficient that he is gone ;  
    A great man dies alone.

Headland, river and bay  
    Wait for the implied night,  
And I, as I move away,  
    Accept a mutinous fate,  
Accept the perpetual sea's  
    Recurrent elegies.

Seabirds adorning the hill  
Move with a bickering grace  
As each descending bird  
Settles into its place.  
Smoothly the weak day ends.  
Nothing can make amends.

### BERNICE AMES

#### *Each Roof*

FROM the crest of the hill  
Stutters a sentence of roof tops  
Gutteral, punctuated by shrubs  
Vine-tied to the green of earth.

Each word codes a family living  
The slope of the roof a character hint  
Tipped with pride to slant the wind and stipple the rain  
Or slashed with a greed for sun.

Even as a word conceals, portrays  
Exists with a personal music  
Does the roof pad the shock  
Between man and world  
Pushing inward to a concentration of self  
While the chimney, a stem of inner fires,  
Pulls the mind toward God.

From the summit of hill  
The sentence is long  
Crowding the breath with its beauty.

*U.S.A.*

## GEORGE WALTON

### *Madrigal*

WHEN my love down the garden goes  
in dainty muslin dressed,  
disquietude assails the rose—  
it turns, and then distressed,  
    Oh, jealous and distressed,  
each blossom bows its lovely head,  
all envious of her  
who mocks the rose, or white or red,  
and who belies compare  
    with roses anywhere.

*Canada.*

## MAURICE TASNIER

### *Each New Death*

THE hour shuts on each new death  
Then opens like a flower, white  
In the sun. And where the life had been  
A fat bee sits, with eyes  
As reticent as button-holes  
In a fury of fur.

## REVIEWS

*The Sense of Movement*: Thom Gunn (Faber, 10s. 6d.).

ALTHOUGH in *The Sense of Movement* Mr. Thom Gunn comes to closer grips with some of the themes and ideas he touched upon in *Fighting Terms*, and the line of continuity between the two volumes can easily be distinguished, the later collection exhibits a marked advance in technical control, imaginative force, and maturity of outlook. Even the weakest poems succeed in rousing one's interest. Most of Mr. Gunn's earlier crudities and slickness have been eliminated, and one senses a serious attempt to write poems that are poems rather than clever posturings in verse (from this obvious generalisation I would exclude such poems as *A Mirror for Poets* and *Carnal Knowledge* in *Fighting Terms*.) Occasionally, of course, he still strikes an attitude, or idealizes "the tough",

"At the street corner, hunched up,  
he gestates action, prepared  
for some unique combat in  
boots, jeans, and a curious cap  
whose very peak, jammed forward,  
indicates resolution."  
"he presides in apartness,  
not yet knowing his purpose  
fully, and fingers the blade."

using his motor-cyclists "bent on the handlebars" much in the same naive manner as Auden used airmen and engineers in his early work, the over-simplification tending to distort the truth of human experience; but one gains the impression that there is now a great deal more real feeling behind the pose. As he observes in the poem on *Elvis Presley*,

"Whether he poses or is real, no cat  
Bothers to say : the pose held is a stance  
Which, generation of the very chance  
It wars on, may be posture for combat."

Note the mysterious threat of violence. This exaggerated pose of toughness appears again in the witty *Lines for a Book*:

"I think of all the toughs through history  
And thank heaven they lived, continually.  
I praise the overdogs from Alexander  
To those who would not play with Stephen Spender."

which, however amusing on first hearing or reading, is well below the standard Mr. Gunn has set himself in the poems under review. As light verse, no doubt, it is acceptable, but one has only to examine its implications to see it fall to pieces.

If I seem to dwell upon the defects of this volume—and, to be just, they are not much in evidence—it is because I think that they are important, both to poetry in general and to the development of this poet's work in particular. At the same time, I want to make it clear that *The Sense of Movement* is an outstanding volume and thoroughly deserves its recommendation by the Poetry Book Society. Quite apart from its display of craftsmanship (especially in the deployment of language, and the precise and consistent use of extended metaphor), its fresh approach to old subjects, and its relevance to our own troubled age, it has a unity which is rarely found in a collection of poems written at various times and occasions. The title reflects Mr. Gunn's preoccupation with what is undoubtedly one of the major problems of the intellectual to-day—the conflict between a sense of the futility of action and a recognition of the necessity for decisive action; and almost every poem, whatever its subject—motor-cyclists roaring through the countryside, Merlin imprisoned in his cell, or St. Martin's encounter with the beggar, Mr. Gunn succeeds in presenting a fresh aspect of the dilemma. In *On the Move*, for instance, whilst describing his motor-cyclists, he is concerned with purposeless action, movement for the sake of movement :

“A minute holds them, who have come to go :  
The self-defined, astride the created will  
They burst away; the towns they travel through  
Are home for neither bird nor holiness,  
For birds and saints complete their purposes.  
At worst, one is in motion; and at best,  
Reaching no absolute, in which to rest,  
One is always nearer by not keeping still.”

and if *The Nature of an Action* suggests that he is not entirely convinced by this argument—

“Each gesture that my habit taught me fell  
Down to the boards and made an obstacle.”

“I reached the end but, pacing back and forth,  
I could not see what reaching it was worth.”

—he nevertheless appreciates the *necessity* of action, even if it is movement in a vicious circle :

"A fragment of weak flesh that circles round  
Between the sky and the hot crust of hell,  
I circle because I have found  
That tracing circles is a useful spell  
Against contentment, which comes on by stealth;  
Because I have found that from the heaven sun  
Can scorch like hell itself,  
I end my circle where I had begun."

(*A Plan of Self Subjection*)

and in *Merlin in the Cave* seeks a significance beyond the act itself :

"—How can a man live, and not act or think  
Without an end? But I must act, and make  
The meaning in each movement that I take.  
Rock, bee, you are the whole and not a part.  
This is an end, and yet another start."

Though, as the above quotations show, these poems are closely related, often complementing the others whilst exploring further ground, it should be emphasized that they stand as separate poems in their own right, some of them very good poems indeed; and if they deal with philosophical abstractions, the ideas expressed in them are couched in concrete terms and images which have direct relevance to the situations presented by the individual poems in which they appear, as well as to the central preoccupations of the volume as a whole. But it is the search for a meaning in action, or to put it another way, the search for a significant pattern of values on which human activity (and hence life) can be based which gives *The Sense of Movement* its peculiar quality, and Mr. Gunn his rich potentiality.

"I was, for Alexander,  
the certain victory; I  
was hemlock for Socrates;  
and in the dry night, Brutus  
waking before Philippi  
stopped me, crying out 'Caesar!'

Or if you call me the blur  
that in fact I am, you shall  
yourself remain blurred, hanging  
like smoke indoors. For you bring,  
to what you define now, all  
there is, ever, of future." (*Vox Humana*)

HOWARD SERGEANT.

*Tenants of the House*: Dannie Abse (Hutchinson, 12s. 6d.).

*The Hawk in the Rain*: Ted Hughes (Faber, 10s. 6d.).

**D**R. ABSE'S poetry, it seems, is not every critic's cup of tea. Of course, any original and idiosyncratic work is bound to meet with an unsympathetic response in some quarters, but one doesn't expect to find poems possessing the qualities of the best of these encountering a barrier of total resistance in the critical columns of a responsible weekly. But that is what happened, and after reading *Tenants of the House*, I think I can see why. Dr. Abse speaks for the individual in an individual voice, and, eschewing the fashionable gnomic mutter, he speaks out with rather shocking directness and candour. The result when, as occasionally happens, he has little of consequence to say is a windy triteness (*Poem and Message*, for instance) but in poems like *Looking at a Map*, *On Hearing the Monologue of a Deaf Poet*, and *The Trial*, he is successful in a way that is both moving and exciting.

Dr. Abse is endowed with the rare gift of a vision which penetrates to the extraordinary beneath the surface of the ordinary, and he is at his best when permitting this gift free exercise. Sometimes, the vision fails to crystallise or—as in the beautiful and haunting *Second Coming*—it peters out at the end in banality or sentimentality, but when it is sustained and braced with wit, as in *The Meeting* and *Letter to The Times*, the resultant poems are impressive and satisfying.

What's in a name? one wonders as the new poets emerge with their tough, monosyllabic appellations; gone are the Wystans and Stephens and instead we have names more suitable for disc-jockeys or association football players—Ted Hughes, for instance. But his poetry is not up to the standard suggested by the blurb of *The Hawk in the Rain*. He can turn a pretty lyric and occasionally he flashes a sharp satirical blade, but he has one conspicuous fault: he tries to pound you to jelly with his epithets. Poem after poem is marred with ugly compound adjectives:

“Bloodily grabbed dazed last-moment-counting  
Morsel . . . .”

“His mightier-than-a-man dead bulk and weight”

He makes the mistake of trying to communicate the big feelings with the big words—all the bloodies, mires, shrieks and frenzies cancel each other out, and the dagger he aims at your heart often turns out to be one of those fearsome looking weapons with blades

made of soft rubber. At his worst he betrays advance symptoms of Hopkins's Disease, but there are also signs that he may yet be returned to normal health, and if this happens he may produce some very fine work indeed.

Perhaps I am being a little hard on a first book by a young poet, but it is a Poetry Book Society choice and the poems are good enough to demand unsentimental criticism. It will be interesting to see what Mr. Hughes produces in the future.

VERNON SCANNELL

*Best Poems of 1956*, Borestone Mountain Poetry Awards of 1957  
(Stanford University Press, \$3.50).

*Poetry in our Time*: Babette Deutsch (Columbia University Press.  
London : Oxford University Press. 40s.).

THE eighth annual volume sponsored by Borestone Mountain Poetry Awards (reviewed in *Outposts* No. 33) was somewhat late in making its appearance. Now, pressing hot on its heels, comes the ninth collection, *Best Poems of 1956*, threatening to surpass its predecessor both in quality and representativeness. Of the 86 contributors to this anthology of the best poems published in the magazines of the English-speaking world at least 24 are British; and it is pleasing to find that this year Margaret Stanley-Wrench and April Pemberton are among the six prize-winners.

I must apologise for introducing statistics of this seemingly irrelevant nature, but until the 1955 volume British poets made such a poor showing in the Poetry Awards series that one cannot help noticing the change. The Editors have certainly done a thorough job in combing the magazines which publish poetry (from the duplicated *Ore* to the sophisticated *New Yorker*), and have included new poets such as Michael Ivens and Patricia Beer as well as seasoned campaigners such as May Sarton, W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender and Theodore Roethke. Those who indulge in supporting little magazines will be glad to see Philip Larkin's *An Arundel Tomb* (from *The London Magazine*), Elizabeth Jennings'

*Gift of Tongues* (from *Departure*), David Scott Blackhall's *Cataract* (from *Outposts*) and Sydney Tremayne's *The Galloway Shore* (from *Saltire Review*) holding their own in what can only be described as a very distinguished company. Indeed, one of the merits of this anthology series is that it rescues and calls attention to poems which might so easily be missed—for who in these days can afford to subscribe to more than one or two magazines? Another is that it keeps both British and American readers informed as to what is happening in poetry outside their own countries. As Carolyn Kizer remarked when reviewing the work of British poets in *Poetry* (Chicago) : "Though we may not have sorted out the current literary controversies abroad, and may be unable to tell a Maverick from a Movement without a program, we can judge the poets by what they say, rather than what they say they say." Armed with this volume British readers will be able to judge American poets—John Ciardi, Leah Bodine Drake, Richard Eberhart, Sara Henderson Hay, Howard Moss and Howard Nemerov, in particular—by what they say rather than by what we have been told they say. There is even a new lyric by Dylan Thomas included.

For the record, the prize-winning poems in the general magazine section are *A Letter for Allhallows* by Peter Kane Dufault, *The Zoo* by Anthony Ostroff, and *A Memorial* by Margaret Stanley-Wrench; and in the undergraduate section, *Songs of a Spearman* by Graeme Wicks, *Rising Up Note* by April Pemberton, and *Praise of Wastelands* by Margaret Lamb.

The main purpose of Miss Deutsch's ambitious survey of British and American poetry from Thomas Hardy to the present day is "to make the poetry more accessible to the intelligent reader", but enlightening as it is on the work of American poets, its treatment of British poets leaves much to be desired. Obviously, a volume of this kind could hardly cover the whole ground thoroughly and one could not expect the work of every poet of any real stature to be examined in detail, but it is difficult to understand the criterion by which Miss Deutsch chooses some poets and excludes all mention of others. In her Foreword she tells us that though she has been unable to take all the practitioners into account, she has attempted "to deal at length with significant trends and to neglect neither the founders of modern verse, nor fine poets of slight output, nor yet the poets' poets of greater range." This does not explain why she has studied, say, the poetry of Kathleen Raine, but not that of Anne Ridler; of Elizabeth Jennings, but not that of Philip Larkin, John Wain, D. J. Enright or Thom Gunn; of Roy

Fuller, but not that of Lawrence Durrell or Henry Reed. The younger romantic poets, such as Thomas Blackburn, John Heath-Stubbs, Dannie Abse, J. C. Hall, etc., are completely overlooked, although some of them have already published three or more volumes. And what can one make of a critic who, with 400 pages at her disposal, devotes a single sentence to so important a poet as Edwin Muir ("another traditional poet who has written memorable lyrics" !) and that only in the Foreword to the second printing (written in 1956) as if he had just been discovered? Or who suggests that Housman has been the main influence on Norman Nicholson? Miss Deutsch's method of grouping under chapter headings, lacking any chronological sequence, is confusing, too, and tends to show some of her poets in a false light.

However, Miss Deutsch is on surer ground with the Americans, and her volume can be recommended to the general reader who is anxious to learn something about the poetry written on the other side of the Atlantic.

JOHN SEYMOUR

*Without Beer or Bread*: Alan Sillitoe (Outposts Publications, 2s. 6d.).

*Mandrake Me*: David Marno (Villiers Publications, 2s. 6d.).

*Bjarni*: Gael Turnbull (Migrant Books, 5s.).

*Without Beer or Bread* commendably maintains the high standards displayed by its predecessors in the *Outposts* series of booklets. Mr. Sillitoe proves himself to possess ample funds of honesty and imagination. His skilful choice of adjectives and forthright statements compel one to return repeatedly to his lines. He has to be savoured, not merely read. One has the sensation that his expression of ideas has been made in the only manner possible, and this with a minimum of fuss. There is nothing complex about his work. His moods always exhibit the unstrained confidence of the mature poet, but his longest poem is undoubtedly his best. Here again, he asserts himself as a vigorous poet armed with the simplicity of the artisan.

"Walking the streets with a leper's pain  
And guts screwed tight  
As cognac climbs the stairway to each brain."

Mr. David Marno also is an energetic poet, although most of the poems in *Mandrake Me* are clearly to be labelled "experimental". This is not to say that Mr. Marno has not achieved a permanent style. His sonnets are efficient vessels for his wit, and he appears content within his pedestrian lines. His tongue-in-cheek humour is admirable, but the more serious poems in *Mandrake Me* often contain lines which seem to be strained when compared with Mr. Marno's sporadic bursts of brilliance. One is suspicious of the word "anaemically" in his poem *Icarus*:

"His waxen wings sun-riddled  
Droop anaemically at low ebb."

However, Mr. Marno is capable of graceful and precise lines :

"A singing rib  
That glitters on the crusted reef."

Last, and I am afraid least, is Dr. Gael Turnbull's *Bjarni*, which is disappointing in several ways. Dr. Turnbull fails to secure one's interest or to rouse one's feelings. Few readers will be imaginative enough to discover any communication in this conversational style :

"Listen carefully. Do as I tell you. It is  
very simple. They will be glad to believe  
slander."

Examples of this deficiency of spirit are frequent.

"Her straight neck  
is looped with diamonds  
Her hair is knit  
With a golden ribbon."

One could hardly say that Dr. Turnbull is over-lush ! Before he approaches a wider audience in this country, I would suggest a departure from the dissection of esoteric prose.

JOHN E. CASPALL